

## COUNCIL ON AGING/SENIOR CENTER

### Fiscal Year 2011

**PRINCIPAL GOAL:** To run a multi-purpose Senior Center that serves as the community focal point for the provision of services to the elderly. The Senior Center works to initiate, facilitate, coordinate, and/or provide those services which in the broadest sense enhance dignity, support independence, maintain health, and promote the involvement of Amherst's elderly in the general community.

#### **THE SENIOR CENTER: A VITAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE**

Whether it's simply reading our 16-page **bi-monthly newsletter, *THE SENIOR SPIRIT***, or coming in daily for the hot lunch program, Amherst's older residents have come to rely on the Senior Center. Here are examples of some of our program and service offerings in FY 11:

**CLINICS:** foot care, ear irrigation, massage, blood pressure, flu/health fair, hearing aid repair, free consultations two days a week with an R.N., psychological counseling, physical therapy screening

**FITNESS PROGRAMS/CLASSES:** Morning Strength training, gentle fitness, Tai Chi, folkdance, line dancing, ballroom dancing, Osteoporosis Progressive Resistance Training Exercise, EnhanceFitness®, Senior Yoga, Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program, Improving Balance and Mobility with the Alexander Technique

#### **ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES, EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS/WORKSHOPS:**

Middle Eastern Cooking Classes, "Nutrition and Cooking for One", Special Topics in Cosmology, Flower Arranging Classes, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, "Understanding Osteoarthritis and How It Impacts You", "Hospital Calling", New Options weekly discussions, "Elder and Domestic Abuse: There Is No Room for Abuse In Any House", "Figure and Portrait Drawing", "Paint for Fun" Workshops, Craft Workshops, Memoir Writing Classes, Howard Singer's "Money Talk" Monthly Seminars, Preventing Falls Among Older Adults" Classes, Second Career Volunteer Book Reading, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, "Why Quantum Physics?" Classes, Laughter Yoga Classes, "Balance Screening", "Back Care", Senior Meditation Classes, Woodcarving Classes, "Continuing Drawing" Classes, "Taking Care of Business: Planning for the Future" Seminar, "Improving Sleep Quality as We Age" Seminars, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, "Hot and Bothered About Breast Cancer Screening", "Taking Care of Yourself & Others", "Prescription Interaction: How Do Medicines Affect You", "Heart Smart", "America in Transition" Discussion; "The Cosmology of Space, Time & Matter", "Cosmology and Chaos, Complexity and Emergence", "Sighting and Formal Point Perspective Drawing Classes; "Introduction to Scratchboard" Drawing Class, "Introduction to Collage" Drawing Class, "Mixed Media" Drawing Classes, "Medicare & The New Health Care Law" Seminar, "Intergenerational Collaborative Art Classes", "Unnatural Causes" Screenings, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, "Rheumatology", "Common Blood Disorders of the Aging Process", "Diagnosing and Treating Dementias", "Cancer Connection—Support Services for People With Cancer, Their Families and Caregivers in Our Own Community", Individual Computer Tutoring, Book Reading Sisters: An Anthology, "My Life, My Health" Classes, "The Cosmology of Space, Time and Matter" Course, "Cosmology and Chaos, Complexity and Emergence" Course, "Creating Jewish Comfort Foods" Class, A.A.R.P. "Driver Safety" Class, "Winter Driving: How to Make an Auto Safety Kit", Writing Workshops: Discover the Writer Inside You", "Stroke Support Group", Book Discussion: Caring for Dying Loved Ones: A Helpful Guide for Families and Friends", "Hearing Loss and Related Issues", "Diversity" Workshop, "Identity Theft and Credit Card Fraud", "Value" Drawing Class, "Basic Color Theory" Drawing Class, "Drawing Transparent Glass Objects", "Creating Texture" Drawing Class, "Portraying Fabric" Drawing Class, "Reflections" Drawing Class, "Cosmology and Chaos, "Complexity and Emergence" Cosmology Classes, "Strong Theory and Super String Theory: Beauty and the Difficult", "Home Medications—Trick or Treat", "How Essential Nutrient Requirements Change With Age", "How You Can Prevent Colon Cancer", "Valentine-Making Workshop", "Crime Prevention and Fire Safety", "Matter of Balance" Classes

**SOCIAL RECREATION:** Tea Party, Musical Showcases, Senior Center Community Tag Sale, Thanksgiving Dinner, bridge, scrabble, billiards, Chinese Mahjongg, grocery bingo, Volunteer Awards Social, Singing Suppers funded by Amherst College, Holiday Concert/Party, First Annual Spring Follies, weekly cribbage classes/games, Mexican Train Dominos and trips: Day in Rockport, Rockies Highlights 9-day tour, Lake Winnepesaukee Cruise, Day at Foxwoods, Day in Boston (on your own), Trains & Canyons of the Southwest 10-day tour, Mohegan Sun Casino, Steaming Tender Restaurant in Palmer and movie, Lights, Camera...Oscars! Springfield Symphony Orchestra Concert, Pacific Northwest & California 8-day tour, Bright Nights and The Salem Cross Inn, New England Spring Garden & Flower Show & Old Mill Restaurant, "Cirque Eloize" at the Citibank Center for the Performing Arts in Boston, Day on Your Own in New Haven CT

**SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS:** HVES (Highland Valley Elder Services) Title III Congregate hot lunch program, Meals on Wheels evening hot supper through the University of Massachusetts, HVES Title III Home Delivered hot lunch, AARP Tax Assistance, Tax Exemption Seminar (Assessor's Office), leaf raking and help with snow/ice removal, personal care/homemaking referral, friendly visitor program, social worker counseling/I+R, Brown Bag monthly groceries through Western Mass. Food Bank, Food Box monthly groceries through Amherst Survival Center, free weekly bread/produce giveaway, emergency food pantry, volunteer driving, SHINE health insurance counseling, tax assistance, Tax Work-Off Plan intake, & placement, subsidized van ticket sales, farmers' market coupon distribution, medical rides and free wheelchair and medical equipment loan closet, free smoke detector program with Amherst Fire Department, and partnership with the SALT Council to provide services such as house numbering, RUOK, File of Life, 911 Cell Phone distribution, SAFE Elder project, Salvation Army Office Hours for Emergency Assistance, H.E.L.P. (Hampshire Elder Law Program) assistance, Eye Screening with the Balin Eye & Laser Center, Prescription Pick-Up and Delivery, 'Memory Screenings', Wisdom Works Job Readiness Training.

#### PARTICIPATION IN FREE/LOW COST FOOD PROGRAMS

<b>Name of Program</b>	<b>FY 07</b>	<b>FY 08</b>	<b>FY 09</b>	<b>FY 10</b>	<b>FY 11</b>
Meals on Wheels (UMass food delivered mid-afternoon)	5,006 (17% increase)	4,790 (4% decrease) If no snow days we would have served 140 more and seen only a 2% decrease	4,324 (9% decrease) If no snow we would have delivered 101 more or 4,423 - a 7% decrease	4622 (7% increase) impressive, considering 3 snow days.	4,867 (5.3% increase) -- if there had been no snow days the count would have been 5,009 meals or a 8.4% increase)
Home delivered meals (HVES food delivered at 11 AM)	16,118 (11% increase)	16,749 (4% increase) If no snow we would have delivered 16,961 meals and then the increase would have been 9.5%	16,061 (4% decrease) If no snow we would have served 103 more, 16,164 - a 3.5% decrease	15,182 (5.5% decrease) due to the weather and grantor's fiscal constraints	13,924 (8.3% decrease) partially due to 4 days of weather issues = 245 meals. (Otherwise 6.7 % decrease) HVES's quarterly reassessment of eligibility continues to impact participation.
Brown Bag (Western Mass Food Bank)	1,017 (1% decrease)	1,016 (>1% change)	1,016 No change	1,054 (4% increase)	979 (7.2% decrease)
Food Box (Survival Center food)	529 (17% increase)	483 (9% decrease)	543 (13% increase)	468 (13.9% decrease)	429 (8.4 % decrease)

## PARTICIPATION IN FREE/LOW COST FOOD PROGRAMS

Name of Program	FY 07	FY 08	FY 09	FY 10	FY 11
Free Bread & Produce Giveaway	5,493 (3% increase)	4,960 (10% decrease)	2,338 (48% decrease) Snow days, less food to give out	2,129 (9% decrease BUT #s would have increased if we didn't have to cancel six times.)	2,262 (6.3% increase) The program would have seen a 15.7% increase if we didn't have to cancel 4 weeks due to snow and elections
Grocery Pantry Emergency Food Giveaway	115 (12% increase)	38 (67% decrease)	45 (19% increase)	42 (6.7% decrease)	37 (12% decrease because more people are participating in the weekly free bread and produce program.)

### UPDATE ON FOOD PROGRAMS

Our home-delivered **lunchtime** meals program, which asks for only a suggested donation from the participant, continues to be an essential support to elders in Amherst as they are living longer and find it difficult to shop, cook and pay for food. As fuel costs increase, the home delivered meal becomes more and more important also as a means to afford other essentials. We have four lunchtime meal delivery routes daily to residents in Amherst and Pelham and we use volunteer drivers exclusively. With the price of fuel relatively high, two thirds of our drivers take the \$.50/mile reimbursement. We receive \$1.19 per home delivered meal from our HVES Title III grant to cover gas and other program expenses. This doesn't cover the gas reimbursement for meal recipients living deep in Pelham or the far edges of Amherst. The challenge of keeping drivers as fuel costs increase is a nationwide problem and ideas are being floated for how to cope, such as delivering frozen meals 2-3 times a week. We feel this would be a risky change as the well-being check, an important component of the service, would then be compromised. Additionally some elders are too frail to deal with frozen meals.

Our home-delivered **supper-time** UMASS Meals on Wheels (MOWs) program has seen an increase of 245 meals delivered but a decrease in the number of participants. The increase would have been larger by 142 meals delivered, but there were 7 days where meals were cancelled due to the weather. It's interesting that in FY 10 we had 57 participants and, while that number decreased to 52 in FY 11, more people were long-term so our duplicated count went up. The decrease in the Emergency Food Pantry could be due to assisting people who access that service with applications to the following programs: the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), what used to be Food Stamps, the Brown Bag program out of the Western Mass Food Bank, the Amherst Survival Center's Senior Food Box program, and giving them information on the Senior Center's Wednesday Free Bread & Produce program. With the Survival Center Food Box program, the decrease is likely because all 60 participants do not order a box of food each month.

### **SENIOR HEALTH SERVICES UPDATE**

Senior Health Services staffed by a registered nurse, provides a variety of health services to community seniors including blood pressure monitoring, blood glucose testing, medication information, weight monitoring, nutrition information, wound and skin assessment, ear and throat inspection and assistance with responding to a variety of health care needs.

The nurse provides a walk-in clinic in the “Bubble” Room at the Bangs Community Center on Mondays and Thursdays, and in addition has provided a weekly community clinic at the Clark House Apartments and has made home visits for those in need. In FY 11, more than 1,264 client contacts were logged for seniors served by the program. At the end of the fiscal year, the nurse also began regular hours of service on Monday mornings at the Ann Whalen Apartments that will continue into the future.

It is important to note that the Amherst Senior Center's Senior Health Services program, receives no Town funding, but continues to grow and thrive thanks to donations and grants. An annual \$10,000 donation from Amherst residents Joseph and Dorothy Gavin continued to provide the primary funding for the Bangs based twice-weekly clinics over the year. Community agencies like Cooley Dickinson Hospital and the Amherst Women's Club have also provided important support to the program. Donations of new medical supplies are also appreciated, to be used in the clinic or distributed to seniors in need.

Other health services offered at the Senior Center include: fee-for-service ear irrigation and foot care clinics with RNs; weekly therapeutic massage clinics; free twice monthly ear irrigation clinics with volunteer, Dr. Daniel Clapp; and approximately 20 health seminars with local health professionals which over the last year have often been televised by Amherst Community Television/Amherst Media to reach a wider audience.

### **GRANTS FOR OUTREACH SERVICES**

The Senior Center received two grants from our Area Agency on Aging (Highland Valley Elder Services) for services to special populations. The first was \$4,000 to pay for services and programs for underserved minority populations, particularly Hispanic. A phone survey of Hispanic elders in Amherst showed that information in Spanish was desired primarily on health care benefits and fuel assistance. The three main reasons for not participating at the senior center are transportation, language barriers and the reality that the extended family provides needed supports. Future plans include translation of Senior Center brochures, some flyers and possibly *The Senior Spirit*.

The second grant was \$600 to pay for gas used to deliver medicines to homebound elders and to provide rides to doctors' appointments when PVTa van transportation doesn't work. This service has been very appreciated by elders.

### **EMERGENCY FUND**

In October 2009 Amherst College made an extremely generous donation of \$40,000 to the Town. The Emergency Fund with \$10,000 was set up with the Town for the Senior Center to utilize in assisting elders with paying utility arrears, unpaid medical bills and other emergency situations in elder households. A sub-committee of the Council on Aging developed policies for the use of the funds. Thirteen elder households utilized \$2,530.51 of the fund during FY 11.

### **COUNCIL ON AGING TACKLES SENIOR PARKING ISSUES**

A subcommittee of the Council on Aging has been working with staff to address the long-standing issues around parking for elders near the Bangs Community Center. The COA hopes to bring a recommendation to the Select Board in early FY 12 which would enable Amherst residents 65 and older to purchase an annual parking sticker for a reasonable cost. The mission of this pilot program is to encourage elders to use the Senior Center more frequently because the cost for regular users will be diminished and the system will be easier to manage.

### **NEW INFORMATIONAL BROCHURES**

Senior Center staff and members of the Council on Aging collaborated on two new brochures which were paid for by the Friends of the Amherst Senior Center. One outlines the Friendly Visitor program and how to get involved. The other general informational brochure serves as a companion to *The Senior Spirit* and fills in the gaps about the Senior Center mission, its focus as a “wellness” center, volunteer opportunities, staff, an overview of programs and services offered and the role of the Friends of the Amherst Senior Center.

### **TAX WORK-OFF PLAN**

The Tax Work-Off Plan enables elders (age 60 and above) whose primary residence is in Amherst and who meet the income guidelines, to work 125 hours for a \$1,000 abatement on their property taxes per fiscal year. The work, performed in Town departments, does not replace any employee positions. There presently are 30 slots and over this past fiscal year there were 30 participants working in the following departments: Senior Center, Jones Library, Munson Library, Leisure Services, and the Collectors. A total of 1,786 hours were worked by Tax Work-Off participants in the Senior Center. Many Tax Work-Off participants work more than the 125 hours and that time is donated to the Town. Intake and placement is handled by Senior Center Social Worker, Maura Plante.

### **FRIENDS FUNDRAISING SUCCESS**

The Friends of the Amherst Senior Center held the **Second Annual Amherst Follies** at the Amherst Regional High School on May 1st. Produced by Donna Lee Entertainment, it was a major fundraising variety show. All entertainers donated their time and talent. It was a success and netted about \$2,106. Total money raised by the Friends in FY 11 was \$16,441.66. The Friends have decided to change the venue in 2012 to Amherst College's Buckley Hall in order to decrease overhead costs. Additionally the Follies will be held in March when there are not so many competing community events.

### **IN-KIND DONATIONS**

Although resources through the Town budget are limited, the Senior Center is able to offer a wide array of programs and services because of two important categories of contributions: **volunteer time** and **in-kind donations of goods and services**. In FY 11 approximately 13,218 hours of volunteer time was given by 325 volunteers in the following categories:

# of Hours Given	# of Volunteers
20 hours/week or more	1
5 hrs/wk up to 19.5 hrs/wk	11
1-5 hrs/wk	54
10hrs/yr to 50hrs/yr	148
Less than 10 hrs/yr	111

**The value of these hours, according to the Points of Light Foundation is \$256,204**

In-kind donations represent tangible goods or services generally considered essential for the Senior Center's operations, but not paid for out of its budget. See the table looking at some FY 11 in-kind donations (this list is not exhaustive.)

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In-Kind Donation	Estimated Value
Rent/Space (gross square feet=13,505)	\$152,250
Gas donated by meals deliverers, staff	\$3,436
Utilities	\$22,027
Van Garaging, Gas & Service	\$109.98
Custodial/Maintenance	\$74,536
Plowing/Outside Maintenance	\$2,295
Durable Medical Equipment	\$4,775
Computers/phones/printers/tech. support	\$35,000
Donated Goods	\$18,551
Value of Crafts Made & Sold for Sr. Ctr.	\$1,351
Recognition Event	\$167
Furniture/Equipment	\$24,918

The estimated  
total for FY  
\$640,503.

<b>In-Kind Donation</b>	<b>Estimated Value</b>
Supplies	\$5,858
Entertainers, program expenses	\$3,170
New MSC® swipe station & service	\$4,695
Luncheons, food	\$245,298
Cable TV Service	\$360
Books/Videos/Magazines/Puzzles	\$2000
Piano tuning	\$720
Outreach Grant	\$4,600
Newsletter	\$8,764
Lunch Site Director & Assistant	\$14,350
Subscriptions, Golden Age Radio	\$180
Equip. rental & maintenance	\$391
Craft Workers, Nurse	\$10,700

#### **PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

The 2010 Federal Census has shown that Amherst residents 60 and over have increased 34% in the last ten years. The COA's professionally conducted 2010 Survey of Amherst residents 50+, which was paid for by the Friends of the Amherst Senior Center, identified unmet needs. The Council on Aging and staff are hampered in their efforts to meet these needs by the amount and design of space in the Bangs Community Center. A subcommittee of the COA has studied a large number of centers in other parts of Massachusetts and Connecticut that are stand alone, and specifically designed for senior center use, as well as renovated centers that are within a community center or stand alone. It is anticipated that recommendations will be ready to present to the Town Manager and Select Board by the end of FY 12.

Respectfully submitted,  
Nancy Hirsh Pagano, Director